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NOTES AND FRAGMENTS.

SOME FANNIN CORRESPONDENCE.—The interesting letter below has just been presented to the State Library by ex-Governor F. R. Lubbock.¹ The latter part of it, dealing with Fannin's personal history, has been printed by Governor Lubbock in his *Six Decades in Texas*.

Velasco. Rio Brasos. Prov. Texas

27th August 1835

Major Belton

U S A

Mobile Point

My Dear Major—Allow me to recall to your mind our short, but to me, pleasant acquaintance— When I saw you, but for a few moments last winter in Mobile, we had some conversation in regard to this interesting country, when it was suggested by me that we should probably require aid from our friends in the U. States, & particularly from a few of the experienced officers. To this you made no direct reply as to yourself—nor indeed did I then expect to *need it so soon*, or I should then have pressed you farther on the subject.

The time is near at hand—nay has arrived, when we have to look around us and prepare, with our limited resources, for *fight*.

I am well satisfied that you have not been an idle spectator of what has been passing in the Interior states of this Republic, and of course, it would be superflous for me to go into a detail of all the grievances the people of Texas have suffered, until forbearance is no longer a virtue; and we now have the dread alternatives presented to us, “of a tame submission to the subversion of our Constitutional rights and acquiescence to Military rule, or like men (& free born *white men too*) fight to the knife.”

¹ March 23, 1904.

The “Fannin” letter that I have the pleasure of placing in the Library came to me thus, Mr. Deffenbaugh, for many years the Secretary of the Texas Veterans’ Association, held it. After his death his executor, finding the letter with his papers, gave it me, to be disposed of as I might deem proper. I now beg leave to place it in the State Library.

F. R. LUBBOCK.

It is scarcely necessary for me to say which horn of the dilemma, will be laid hold of, and with what pertinacity that hold will be maintained. We have no men to spare, but each man is a host. Our *preparation* is now poor but hope soon that it will be bettered. There are but few Muskets and only some 6 or 8 pieces of artillery, & few ball &c but 1000 fathom of chain cable; and at least 4000 Rifles. If you can get a Map, you will see that we are *well fortified* to the west—there being a distance of some 200 miles of a perfect barren desert, & *only six watering holes* in the whole route— They now have but one armed vessel (Montezuma) and she mounting one Pivot gun— We are threatened with a descent by water and land of 10,000 troops—and there has already arrived at Bexar (formerly San Antonio) some 1500 or 2000 men & 20 pieces of Artillery— The water party cannot, & we are credibly informed, will not sail to co-operate with them before Novr via Galveston Bay &c. To meet this imposing force, we are now preparing—having organized the National Guards into *Companies*; and sent orders to the U States for arms & munitions; and united in the call of a Convention of the people on the 15th October next. That Convention will *Declare us Independent*, for the reason that we cannot go for the old wreck of a Republic, that having been subverted, & *Centralism* substituted in its stead & acquiesced in by the other States—*Letters of marque* will be issued (applications are already rec'd from old & *gallant officers*) and we will have afloat a sufficient naval force to guard our coast and cripple their trade from the Campeachy banks to N. Orleans— The land party will, thus closed in, be an easy prey.

Thus, my dear Major, have I given you an outline of our affairs & those of the enemy. And now comes the main object of this communication, to wit, Will you authorize me to *use your name* at the approaching convention, or at any subsequent time, as an *officer qualified & willing to command* as brave a set of *backwoodsmen* as ever were led to battle?

The truth is, we are more deficient in suitable materials for *officers*, than we are in soldiers—and all being Americans, will be willing— nay, anxious,—to receive an officer of reputation. I hope to hear from you by the vessel which will return soon—and or [*sic*] any other time you may be pleased write me, & make

such suggestions as you may think advantageous—which will be *confidential* or otherwise, agreeable to your request. “When the hurly burly is *begun*” we will be glad to see as many West Point boys as can be spared—many of whom are known to me, & by whom *I am known as J. W. Walker*—my maternal Grand-father’s name, & by whom I was raised and adopted, & whose name I then bore.¹

By handing your letters to Messrs. Dobson & Williams of Mobile, or forwd to N. Orleans to care of T. Toby & brother, I will receive them regularly— My last voyage from the Island of Cuba (*with 152*) succeeded admirably.

Yr friend &c

J. W. Fannin Jr

The letter was folded and addressed:

“Major — Belton

“U. S. A.

“Commandant Mobile Point—

“Mobile, Alabama

“Care Dobson & Williams.”

On the back of it is this inscription:

“Messrs. Dobson & Williams will please fore’d this without delay and oblige their friend &c

“J. W. Fannin Jr

“Velasco. Prov. Texas.”

Major Belton replied without delay, and on November 6 Fan-

¹In reply to an inquiry, Judge Raines received the following information concerning Fannin’s record at West Point:

Library United States Military Academy,
West Point, New York, March 1, 1904.

To C. W. Raines, Esquire,

State Librarian, Austin, Texas.

My dear Sir:

. . . With respect to James F. Walker, the records show him as being admitted to the Academy, at the age of 14 years 6 months, in 1819, and he was a cadet in the fourth class during the years 1819-1820 and 1820-1821.

I am, sir,

Very respectfully and truly yours,

EDWARD S. HOLDEN,
Librarian.

(Signed by stenographer in absence of writer.)

nin recommended him to the attention of the Consultation in the following letter:¹

Head Quarters of the Army of Texas,
2 miles above Bexar, 6th Nov. 1835.

To the Prst. of the Convention of Texas,
San Felipe

My dear Sir

I herewith inclose for the use of your body a letter from my friend Col. F. S. Belton of the United States Artillery, and now in command of Ft Morgan Mobile point Ala.

It is only necessary for me to say, that I addressed him on the subject of our approaching difficulties in August last, giving him all the information we then had, with regard to all points necessary to form a correct knowledge of our own and enemies situation and resources. In conclusion I asked of him permission to use his name in our proposed military organization, by the convention, knowing him to be one of the most intelligent and accomplished officers of the United States Army, and believing that his services would be acceptable to our fellow-citizens of Texas in the field, as well as by the moral influence it would produce, in the United States of the North. You will see that he does not decline the nomination and, I am satisfied if tendered him by your body, he would accept, at least no harm can result to our service by it, and much good may, and the safe and profitable course should now be taken, when the choice is before us.

You will see that he tenders his services to inspect and forward military arms & stores for our use, and I can vouch for his honesty and honor with my life and fortune. . . .

In haste, I am my dear Sir

Your obt Sevt

J. W. Fannin Jr.

The original of Major Belton's letter cannot be found, but there is a copy in the archives of Texas, recorded in volume III, pp. 37-38. It reads as follows:

¹Archives of Texas, D file 6, No. 559.

Fort Morgan Ala.

Sept. 23, 1835.

My dear colonel,

I hasten to give you an early acknowledgement of yours dated 27. August 1835.

It discusses matters of great moment, in many points of view, but principally as respects the probabilities of success, and the means for effecting it in the struggle which now seems imminent. I am much indebted and gratified for the generous opinions you have formed of my qualifications for the emergency, and to give efficient aid to your noble enterprise.

To be a successful chief requires at least many advantages, which I have not, and would necessarily be slow in acquiring: Some of them are truly obstacles: but zeal and affection for the cause might make head against them, but there are many men among you, whose local information would tell better than mere technical knowledge. You do not say that you have as yet a combined organization, in effecting this, good assistance is necessary to make head against St. Anna's forces, verry good cavalry and fair artillery are necessary, particularly light batteries; these two arms requires sturdy chiefs, and the latter, all quackery apart, some little science and instruction. *Riflemen too*, if they can be brought to steady duty, but it may prove a risque, too late to remedy, to rely, in a country of pampas and *prairie* on a force whose best movements depend on the most finished Drill we have, and the point *perdu* of which is the difficulty of &c, assembling them, and bringing them into close action—I mean practically—it has been thus in all times— the principles of war, as you know, are unchangeable, as those of any science called fixed,— If your convention act coolly and with discrimination there must be found men, who have everything in jeopardy, and a right above all right most sacred when acquired, the right of self or representative Government, among these, you must find those on whom to build hope and command Success, two important elements, passion and principle are thus combined.

I have just consulted an indifferent map— San Antonio seems to be a short way from you, but the country you describe as difficult. The Dictator has at leisure all the resources of the Government, and will at first press you hard, I fear, an early and

energetic use of maritime means, may check him in his communications, which being forced to be over land must prove difficult. He has however well chosen his time, but the despotism of these Dictators is rarely permanent. To join you, however, for which I confess a great inclination is to me a step of great importance, a furlo' for some time and permission to leave the U. States is clogged with forms and difficulties, and a considerable delay would occur: to discard as nothing domestic reasons & duties, being assiduously engaged with education of an only son for West Point or a profession, a resignation too from our service on entering yours would be necessary, and indeed would follow as a matter of course, and many military responsibilities not easily shaken off, or settled up are pending.

To your convention among many other obvious duties [it belongs] to organize a constitutional and administrative government, suited to your enfranchised State. A successful resistance brings with it an immediate necessity for authority, Laws & order, without which mere military success does not radiate beyond the field of Battle, skillfull and faithful financial chiefs are only next to military men in such contests, and there is no lack in the adversary of these high qualities, saving political virtue and honor, have your previous works on *convention*, attained maturity and strength? are laws based upon conventional proceedings? in *wholesome respect* and vigor.

Pray write me and more fully on the points so slightly adverted to between us. I write hastily to meet a chance opportunity via New Orleans and address to Messrs Toby & Brothers,

With great respect & esteem

Truly Yours

Francis S. Belton

P. S. I can be at New Orleans six or 8 days every month, while I am stationed [here] and if I can be of use in selecting or inspecting arms &c or military stores, I will attend to it with pleasure, so my actual expenses only being paid. I fear that like Carolina much trash might be put on you,

in haste

F. S. B.

Colo. J. W. Fannin Jr.

Velasco Texas.

Fannin's letter to the President of the consultation was upon its receipt referred with the above inclosure to a select committee, of which D. C. Barrett was chairman. On November 13, the committee declared that they felt bound to report to the house "the grateful emotions induced by the disinterested offer of Major Francis F. [*sic*] Belton, of the United States Army, to become inspector of cannon, arms, and other military stores to be purchased at New Orleans and Mobile, for the use of Texas; and recommend that his services be accepted, and a vote of thanks be passed and recorded upon the journals of this house and that a copy thereof be forwarded by the president to Major Belton; at the same time informing him of the appointment of Capt. E. Hall, an experienced officer, who is now engaged in performing the same duties, upon a similar offer, who will be reunited with him."¹

The consultation adjourned the following day without acting on this report, and the general council, which succeeded the consultation, seems never to have taken the matter up.

The following letter is interesting as showing Fannin's plan for securing the organization of the army largely under the command of West Point officers:²

To Gov. Smith

. . . I have had tendered to me, for the service of Texas, several of the finest, most intelligent accomplished young officers, now in the U. States Army; all of who, say, that whenever the people of Texas, should organize a Govt. upon such a basis, as to secure to them an honorable employment, with a reasonable prospect of reward, for the noble daring any many sacrifices of of a soldier's life, they would quit the land of their birth & forthwith enter into the ranks of their brethren in Texas.

Could you ask of these young men to resign the bright prospect before them, in a land of Law, Liberty, & the smiles of beauty (ever dear to a soldiers heart) & march fowd. without the slightest assurance of any acknowledgement of their merit?

¹*Journal of the Consultation*, 40.

²Archives of Texas, D file 6, No. 555.

Remember their *Education*, and that to *join you*, they must *first Resign*, their Commissions in the U. S. army.

The first, nearly disqualifies, at least for some time for any other service, & having forfeited all rank in one Govt. entirely settled, they thus may be thrown into another altogether uncertain in its stability; and their reward a cold reception & untimely grave; or what would be esteemed much worse, by a brave & honorable soldier, the *neglect* of merit. Let me call to your consideration the especial qualifications of these young men! They are all Civil, Military and Topl. [topographical] Engineers. In war you need them to project your fortifications on the Coast and elsewhere; and to work *artillery efficiently*. In peace, they may survey your Harbours, Coast, Rail ways, Rivers, & Canals. In short you wish them and must have them to organize & direct your army, and protect your coast, and place your country in that attitude, that it will [be] dangerous to invade it.

The Agent selected by you & furnished with the requisite blank commissions and other instructions, can in a few weeks, have a Brigade thus officered (at least from the rank of Captain to that of Coln.) *recruited as Emigrants* in the U. States, by *the several officers themselves*, and ready to take the field, whenever the enemy invades our Territory

Might I not say, that so far as *dollars* and *cents* are concerned, that a great saving may be made by this policy, by *offensive operations*, and thus cripple the enemy by carrying the war into their own country, and make them pay the cost, & save our own fire-sides of the scourge. I do not pretend to the gift of Prophecy, but little doubt the fulfilment of the last suggestion, if suitable & timely preparation be made to repel the first onset. . . .

J. W. Fannin, Jr

San Felipe 31 [*sic*], Novr 1835.

Nothing came of this suggestion, but if the war had been prolonged and a more vigorous, stable government could have been established, it is possible that it might have been fruitful.

EUGENE C. BARKER.

THE BATTLE OF VELASCO.—

1832

Texas, Austins Colony Aug. 5

My Dear son,

Altho I get no letters from you, yet I feel willing still to write on, hoping that it is not through negligence, in you, but that they have miscaried, and that you will still continue to write, and that I may get some of them— All the family is in good health, and have been so for a good while, your aunt and family is all well, except her little grand daughter mary she has been sick for 2 or 3 weeks with chills and fevers the neighborhood is healthy.—

I suppose you have seen in the publick prints something of our commotions, and no doubt have felt anxious for us, a few weeks ago the clouds of war hung thick over us, but now they are all disperced, and more glorious times approaching than ever have been seen in this dark country,— our commotions in this colony arose from Col. Bradburn having taken 4 or 5 Americans, of the district in which he lived, and put them in confinement, the Alcaldy of the sd. district, went to him and demanded them wishing to have them tryed by the civil law authority, he refused but at length agreed that the Ayantiamanto might try them, which they did, and set them at liberty, a short time afterward, Bradburn had them again in confinement this irritated the people of this colony, and a good many of them volunteered and went down to Bradburn and demanded the prisoners, he required time to deliberate, which they granted, he it is said sent off for help, and then refused, after forfeiting his honor, our men sent on for all the cannon that was in this colony, which they got and put on board of a vessel, at Brassora [Brazoria], but the colonel that commanded at the mouth of the Brassos, would not let them pass, they then attacked the fort, and after a fight of 8 hours the fort surrendered, having fired 90 rounds of artillery, and 4000, Musket shots, our vessel discharged 116 rounds of cannon, I have not learnt how many rifle balls, but such bold malitia I never have heard of before, they stood in the open Prarie, and fought without covert, and even marched up in 32 paces of the mouth of the cannon and shot down the Spaniards as fast as they approached to fire, it is said there was 150 in the fort, and 190 of our men they killed six of our men and we killed

34 of them and wounded I think about 40— about that time Col. Padrea [Piedras] who commands at Nacogdoches, went to our army on the trinity, and treated with them, and went down to Bradburn and arrested him, and delivered all the prisoners to them, which they passed over to civil power, the men having thus obtain'd their object return'd home peaceably, first shewing the Millitary that the constitution should be adhered to and the civil power rule— Soon after this Col. Austin who was in the interior, came on with a col. in Santanas service and declared for Santana, and was Joined by the whole colony, they sent on expresses to the different garrisons, who all readily consented to Join them, Austin say as soon as the legislature meets the State will declare in favor of Santana I do not suppose that we shall have any more fighting here, it is now past a doubt that Santana will gain his point, General Terán has kill'd himself, and I have understood nearly all his army that was not kill'd have Joined Santana, who now holds all the ports of entry, and commands all the revenew, he has men and money plenty while the other side is destitute of money and their men continually deserting them and Joining St. Santana is said to be a true republican, and is determined not to lay down his arms until republicanism prevails he has declar'd in favor of free tolleration, and free emigration, which are two things very desirable in this country, and so soon as that takes place, our country will begin to flourish we shall then have the right kind of people to settle our rich prairies, and bottom lands, those of us that have ventured and have sufered much, will then be repaid for all our toils and troubles— Some parts of this colony has suffered much for rain, other parts have been quite seasonable, and crops good, we have had but one good shower since the 18th of M[arch or May—the MS. is torn] and yet our corn remains green, and we w[ill] make pretty smart corn — As I am about to close I must say something about our fine Mexican Alexander Randle, he is perhaps the hearties and likelies boy we have ever had, and uncommonly handsome, very forward— Susana often talks about you and gives many a kiss for Bro. Wm— She is a very fine little girl, all the children talks a great deal about you and want you to come and see them— it is now nearly dark, and having Just written a long letter to Bro. Mc-

Donald I am tired and will conclude— Give my love to my old friends— Your Aff. Father.

Alexr Thomson.

The letter is addressed,

“Mr Wm D. Thomson
“Giles County
“Tennessee
“Cornerville P. O.”

The above letter was furnished by Mr. E. K. Thomson, of Glen Cove, Texas. It was written by his great grandfather to his grandfather.

EUGENE C. BARKER.

THE ALAMO MONUMENT.—In an article under the above caption published in *THE QUARTERLY* for April, 1903, the author, in speaking of the inscription, “Thermopylae had her messenger of defeat; the Alamo had none,” quotes Captain R. M. Potter as saying, “Where he [the sculptor] got it, I know not. The expression occurred in some public address of the day; but I can not say whether the orator borrowed from the monument, or the reverse.”

At the meeting of the Texas Veterans' Association, held in the city of Waco on the 20th and 21st of April, 1894, Dr. R. C. Burleson, in his address of welcome, quoted the immortal sentence as having been first uttered by General Edward Burleson in an address to the Texans assembled at Gonzales when the news of the fall of the Alamo reached that place. To use Dr. Burleson's own language, “He made them a speech, in plain, rough English, that fired every soldier's heart. In conclusion he used, for the first time, these immortal words: ‘Thermopylae had her messenger of defeat; the Alamo had none. So let it be with every Texan. If Texas goes down in this unequal struggle, let no soldier ever cross the Sabine as a messenger of our defeat.’”

Dr. Burleson may have left some data to show where he obtained this important bit of history. The writer recalls a remark made by her father, Colonel Noah Smithwick, in commenting on Dr. Burleson's address to the effect that the words used by General

Burleson were suggested by another person, better versed in the classics than the speaker. Who this person was, Colonel Smithwick could not, at the moment, recall. It could, however, scarcely have been—as Gen. Hugh McLeod is said to have stated—Gen. Thomas Jefferson Green; for the Gonzales episode antedated General Green's advent into Texas by something like a month.

It is matter for regret that the subject, not seeming at the time important, was not again recurred to, since, at another time, the elusive name might readily have presented itself, and the authorship of the expression might have been established. Dr. Burleson, Colonel Smithwick, and perhaps all those who might have thrown light on the subject, are gone, and the truth may never be known.

NANNA SMITHWICK DONALDSON.